RABBI, MESSIAH, MARTYR

A Modern Picture of the Story of Jesus

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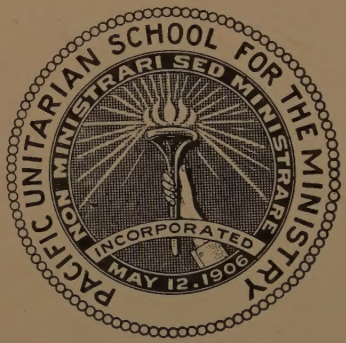

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JESUS—RABBI, MESSIAH, MARTYR

Rabbi, Messiah, Martyr

A Modern Picture of the Story of Jesus

BY

HERBERT RIX, B.A.

Author of 'Tent and Testament'

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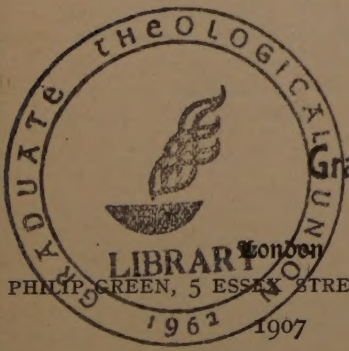

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NOTE

THE accomplished author of these short sketches of the life of Jesus had long studied the subject in the full light of modern research, and his own observations in the land of the Gospel story added in no small degree to his special aptitude for the task here attempted. That task was to set forth, as clearly and definitely as possible, a picture of the great Life as it emerges in our day, freed from the dust and distortions of tradition. Mr. Rix's book, *Tent and Testament*, referred to in his own note on p. 2, was published at the close of last year, shortly after his death.

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I

THE CARPENTER BECOMES A RABBI

IN these three studies of the life of Jesus, my object is to present in a very simple manner an outline of that life as it emerges into view after the critical process has been applied to the Scriptural narrative from which it is drawn. The reader is doubtless aware that the life of Jesus does not take the same shape to us as it did to our fathers. We have nowadays to make many deductions from the New Testament story—many allowances for the superstitious age in which the story was written. We have to allow also for the strong doctrinal prepossessions of the writers, and we have to use our better understanding of the rise and growth of religions and the connexions of Oriental

folk-lore. All this and much more has to be taken into account; so that Christianity—*historical* Christianity—has not quite the same form and colour for us as it had for our fathers.

With the critical process itself we have little or nothing to do here. It is with the *product* and that alone that I intend to deal. I intend to give in briefest and plainest form an outline of the *main facts* of the life of Jesus as many of us now conceive it.

And first, a word or two about the *externals* of his youthful life. Tradition says that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, a small town to the south of Jerusalem. But I believe there has been some confusion here, and that he was actually born in another Bethlehem,[1] a village in the north of Palestine about seven miles from Nazareth. If he was born in this northern Bethlehem, it is probable that his parents removed into the neighbouring town of

[1] In the author's 'Tent and Testament' this view is given up, and Nazareth is held to be the more probable birthplace.

Nazara during his infancy, and that the childhood of Jesus was spent in that town. It is certain that throughout his life he was known as Jesus of Nazara—or to be more precise, Jehoshua Nazerieh—which would be the Aramaic form of his name.

Nazara was a little cluster of cubical houses built in an amphitheatre of rocky hills. It was quite a small town—very little more than a village. The houses were built in terraces, up the slope of the hill. The streets were narrow, crooked, and steep, and here and there a mountain streamlet coursed down among the houses and intersected the rocky terraces upon which they were built. The little town had its market-square, its public fountain, and its synagogue—just as many a small country town in England has its market, its town pump, and its church.

Here, then, Jesus was probably brought up, and we may assume that his life was much like that of other Jewish boys of his time and class—that he helped in the house-work, went out on the hill to gather sticks for the oven, did his part in the

olive and grape gathering, just as the child of the English peasant does in the hop-picking to-day ; went to school at the synagogue, and played games in the little market-place. Indoors, I am afraid, the family was rather crowded, for Joseph and Mary had seven children at least—five sons and two or three daughters ; and it is likely enough that the whole family of nine people lived, cooked, ate, and slept in one room. This was the usual custom : but if Joseph was a well-to-do man (and there is some evidence that he was) he may perhaps have had two or even three rooms. In summer of course they slept on the roof in the open air, according to Eastern habit.

Their furniture consisted of a carpenter's bench and tools, a kitchen fire-place, a sheet of iron for baking bread, a few skin-bottles, an earthen pitcher or two, some cups, some thin mattresses which were spread on the ground at night and rolled up and put away on a shelf in the morning, some mats upon which they squatted cross-legged in the daytime, and a large

chest holding rugs and blankets. There were an oil lamp made of clay, a bushel, a broom, and a mill. The bushel turned topsy-turvy served as a table. That is about all the furniture that Joseph and Mary possessed; and the inventory will enable one, perhaps, to infer the sort of life they led.

Every morning Mary and her daughters ground some corn in the hand-mill, and went to the spring for water; and on the proper days they would sweep the house, bake the bread, and mend the clothes.

At noon the family met together for dinner. The father returned thanks, the eldest son repeated a prayer, and the meal was served. They had no plates, but each one had a large round biscuit which served the same purpose. On the bottom of the upturned bushel a dish was placed full of curds or of wheatmeal porridge, into which they all dipped their bread. There were butter, cheese, eggs, and honey, and in summer grapes and figs, and a curious sort of cake made of the dried and pounded bodies of locusts. There was no flesh

except on feast days. Their drink was generally a thin home-made beer, brewed from wheat and fruits, and called *shechar*.

After dinner they all went back to their work till the evening, when they met again for supper, which, however, was a much simpler meal than dinner.

But now (more important than all this) let us glance at the religious life of Joseph's family. They were certainly pious, and there is some evidence that their connexions and associations were pharisaic: that is to say, they belonged to the *Puritans* of their time. Yakob, one of Jesus' brothers, was noted in later life for his narrow and minute piety: he was a rigid and austere Jew, careful to omit no rite and to observe all the purifications, even after he had joined the Christian movement.

When Jesus was six years old he was sent to school. The classes were held in the synagogue, and the schoolmaster was the person who had charge of the building and of the manuscripts. By the time that he was ten or twelve years old he

knew how to read, write, and reckon; and he was then initiated as a 'Son of the Commandment,' which corresponds in some sort to the church ceremony of confirmation. From that time he had to say a piece of Scripture called the 'Shema' every morning and every evening. And I suppose that on Saturdays he would now go to the *men's* service at the synagogue instead of to the children's catechizing to which Mary had hitherto sent him.

Of his life from this time until he was about thirty years of age we know nothing, except that he worked with his own hands as a carpenter or builder; of this fact we have satisfactory proof. We are, indeed, as the result of certain textual evidence, much more sure that *Jesus* was a carpenter (or rather *builder*, for that is the strict meaning of the term used) than that his father was one. Beyond this, we know nothing of his early manhood.

When we next meet him he is in his third decade.

With these brief glimpses of the early home-life we must content ourselves. These are, of course, little more than the *external* details of the daily life, but they will help us to realize the gulf between the class to which Jesus belonged and the aristocratic Sadducees of Jerusalem, with whom Jesus had scarcely any relations at all till quite the end of his life; the immense gulf also between him and the Roman military chiefs, who were naturally profoundly ignorant of his existence till long afterwards. Jesus was, in fact, at this time one of the most insignificant people in the empire.

When he was about thirty years old there came news of the advent of a young prophet—one who was recognized to be of altogether larger calibre than the general run of Rabbis, or than the Essenian mystics and magicians. We must remember that Palestine was only about as large as Wales, and that there was a pretty constant traffic between the Galilean villages and the Judean capital, so that news of any such movement as this of

John the Baptist's would very soon reach Nazara. And so it came about that the young carpenter went up to Judea to see and hear this new prophet.

The story of John's preaching is told with some fulness in the Gospel of Luke, and may be accepted pretty much as it stands, so far as the character and substance of his teaching is concerned—the teaching of repentance and good works. The account tallies substantially with that given by Josephus in his famous history. But Luke's theory that John was the predestined and conscious *forerunner* of Jesus is quite another matter. It is in all probability quite a mythical idea—an afterthought of a subsequent generation evolved from certain theological considerations.

What the relations of John to Jesus actually were is rather difficult to determine. But I will state briefly how I believe that the matter really stood.

In the first place, it must be understood that John was in his time a vastly more important person than Jesus. The very

fact that Josephus writes as he does about him shows that John the Baptist was a person to take account of. He makes only one bare mention of *Jesus*, and even that bare mention is of doubtful authenticity; but of John he gives some considerable particulars. Jesus, in fact, until quite near the end of his career, was a person of merely local celebrity. He was, moreover, *provincial*—speaking with a rustic accent in a provincial dialect, as the few original words of his speech which are recorded, plainly show; while John, on the other hand, was of *national* celebrity, was the son of a priest, was of Judean birth, and met with very considerable support even among the better class. He was also much more in line with the orthodox Judaism, from which Jesus very soon began to break away. This being so, we may, I think, put aside the idea that John already recognized Jesus as the coming Messiah and himself as the Messiah's forerunner. With even greater certainty we may put aside the idea that Jesus and John were blood-relations—a

notion entertained by Luke, but inconsistent with the rest of the gospel history In short, their personal relationships at this time probably resolve themselves into the simple one of prophet and disciple.

John's mission was strange, and apparently new. His theory was that Israel was hopelessly defiled, and that God would never deliver it from foreign bondage until it was purified. Therefore he set himself to form a new and purified Israel—an Israel within Israel; and he chose baptism as the sign of admission to this new Israel. Jesus the carpenter resolved that he too would be consecrated and become a member of the new Israel, and he therefore underwent at John's hands the ceremony of baptism. There is much that is doubtful about this part of the story, but this, at any rate, is historical—Jesus left his home, travelled to Judea, heard the preaching of John, and was baptized at his hands.

After his baptism Jesus lingered in the South for some considerable time. There is a credible tradition that he spent a

part of that time in the neighbouring wilderness of Judea, living as a hermit in Oriental fashion and meditating upon John's doctrine. The story of the Temptation in the wilderness is perhaps a figurative account of his experiences at this time given by Jesus himself to his disciples at a later day. It is susceptible of different interpretations, but the interpretation which to myself seems best to fit into the general outline of his life is that he was tempted to lay claim to the Messiahship (the *Jewish* Messiahship) and that he withstood the temptation. He was tempted, that is to say, once again to raise the banner of Jewish revolt, and he put the temptation aside because he saw that such revolt would involve the adoption of evil and devilish instruments and means. I believe that he therefore at this time put aside all idea of claiming Messiahship, and that it was not till long afterwards that he reconsidered that idea and finally adopted it in a wholly different and, indeed, novel sense.

The spiritual principles which emerged

in his mind as the result of this inward conflict will be considered later. Let us hasten on to the next event which influenced the course of his life.

This event was the apprehension and imprisonment of John. It was a tremendous blow to John's disciples and to the great cause which they had at heart, and no one seemed to emerge who could lead the movement and carry it forward. Then it was that Jesus felt his own call to the work. But he also felt that he must do the work in his own way, and must develop it along those lines which he had marked out for himself in the retirement of the wilderness. His first step, therefore, was to return to Galilee, where he was at home, and where he understood the character of the people, the social forces at work, and the means which were at his disposal.

Almost immediately after his return he removed from Nazareth to the lake-side town of Caphar-Nahum (the Village of Nahum). Caphar-Nahum, or as we pronounce it, Capernaum, was a busy place

situated on the chief commercial road from Syria to the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt—a port also, which had the carrying trade to and from the opposite shore of the lake—altogether an important centre—not so important, of course, as Tiberias, but Tiberias was inhabited by foreigners and pagans and was loathed by the Jew, especially by the pharisaic Jew. Capernaum answered the purpose of Jesus better in everyway.

As soon as Jesus had taken up his quarters here, he invited four young men of his acquaintance to join him in his enterprise, and together they occupied a house, which they made their head-quarters. At first Jesus confined his operations to teaching in the synagogues of Capernaum and the neighbouring villages, taking up the burden of John's message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' There was nothing offensive to the Jews in this message; in fact he was at this time distinctly popular—'He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.'

To put the matter briefly, Jesus appeared

to his neighbours at this time to be simply a young Rabbi who was becoming rather prominent in that country-side. The business of a Rabbi was to give advice to people who consulted him about the law, to heal the sick both by medicines and charms, and to pronounce edifying aphorisms and maxims; and this answers to the picture which we have of Jesus at the commencement of his Galilean ministry. He had not, it is true, attended the great schools at Jerusalem, but he had undergone some training in the traditional law; we know from his quotations many of the books which he had studied; and we know of one or two occasions on which he used the formulæ for exorcizing demons which other Rabbis used. In fact Rabbi Jehoshua Nazerieh, as he was now called, held the recognized status of a Jewish Rabbi, and was so addressed throughout his ministry until he himself abjured the title.

The next event of any significance which we read of was a tour which he made in the neighbouring villages. Here we have the first departure from the normal life of

the Rabbi. The Rabbi was not usually a missionary, but Jesus evidently felt that this was the most effectual way of carrying forward John's work of establishing the new Israel.

In the course of this tour occurred the incident of the leper, an incident which showed that, up to this point, however unconventional—however original—he might be, he had by no means broken with the established order. For on this occasion he followed the prescribed rules to an even greater extent than he need have done.

According to the Levitical law only the priest could pronounce a man clean from his leprosy, but it had long been the practice for any scribe or Rabbi to provisionally pronounce a man clean, which verdict had afterwards (as soon as convenient) to be confirmed by a priest at Jerusalem. Now in the time of Jesus there was considerable laxity in this matter, and in places distant from Jerusalem the Rabbis had come to usurp entirely the place of the priest, and pronounce on their own authority the decisive and final declaration of cleanness.

It is interesting therefore to find that when such a man came to Jesus to have himself pronounced clean, Jesus touches him and says (using the recognized formula) 'Be thou clean'; but immediately tells him to go to the priest and have the declaration confirmed. In other words, Jesus does not even take the full licence which custom allowed, but kept well within the limits of the Levitical law. I may add, by the way, that there is no sufficient reason for thinking that Jesus *healed* the man, though a legend grew up to that effect, and by and by went so far as to multiply the man by ten.

The whole picture, indeed, of the ministry of Jesus in these first weeks is one of success and approval. There is no suspicion of heterodoxy, no coldness on the part of the authorities, no lack of enthusiasm on the part of the people. He returns from his missionary tour; takes up his quarters again in the house which he occupied at Capernaum, and admits all comers to hear his teaching, till 'there was no longer room, no, not even about the door.'

The next stage in the story, taking it in its natural order (the order which Mark gives us) exhibits the first beginnings of heterodoxy—the little rift within the lute. The trouble began by his doing what every respectable Rabbi, indeed every decent Jew must have felt to be a most injudicious act. He invited Levi, a tax-gatherer—a man who, by his very profession, was of necessity an unpatriotic, and therefore, from the Jewish point of view, an irreligious man, to come home to dinner with him.

Up to this time Jesus had been well within the bounds of Jewish decorum, but this act transgressed those limits, bespoke a certain vein of indiscretion and social rebellion which is so often the first step towards religious heterodoxy.

It is sometimes represented that Jesus went to Levi's house, and that Levi was the same as Matthew. This confusion is caused by a misunderstanding on the part of the editor of Matthew's Gospel. I cannot now enter into the matter, but I have no doubt at all that Professor Kuenen is right; Levi and Matthew were

two different people; the 'call' (as it is translated) was not a call to discipleship, but a simple invitation to dinner; and the 'house' was not the house of Levi, but the house of Jesus.

Well, this feast at Jesus' house made a stir, for he not only invited Levi, but a number of other ceremonially unclean persons. All kinds of outcasts and unclean people—people who made no sort of attempt to keep the ceremonial law—'publicans and sinners,' whose very touch defiled the Jew that suffered it—were invited to sit down to table with Jesus.

Another thing which caused equal astonishment was that Jesus never exhorted his associates or his hearers to fast. This would not have been so remarkable, perhaps, were it not that Jesus himself came of a pharisaic family, that he himself, up to this time had always been reckoned as belonging by religious zeal and Messianic hope to the pharisaic connexion. That one of 'the pious' (as they were called), nay, that one who actually pretended to take up the prophet John's own cry of 'the

coming kingdom,' should give up fasting and never enjoin fasting upon others, was an outrage on the religious customs, the religious sense, the whole fitness of things. It was as if a quaker should take to wearing gay garments, an old-fashioned dissenter take to dancing—nay, more, it was as if a minister, and an eminent minister, should put on worldly airs and neglect the practices of religion. The whole attitude which Jesus began to take up came as a shock to his old religious associates.

One day, at about this time, he was going through the cornfields on the sabbath—I need not narrate the incident : it was to the Jews a clear case of sabbath-breaking, and a man who broke the sabbath deliberately, and actually led his hearers to do the same, was as black as any blasphemer in the eyes of the pious Jews. On another sabbath-day he healed a man, and actually healed him in the synagogue. And on this occasion he not only justified himself, but poured scorn on the sabbath-keepers as if it were they, and not he, who were in fault.

Indeed, it was the way in which he justified himself which made it so hard to bear on these and other such occasions. He never deigned to appeal to Scripture, unless it was to give it a perverse and half-humorous turn, as for instance when he declared that the priests broke the sabbath in the temple, and that David ate the sacred bread and was none the worse. The answers which this young man gave to the reproaches of the elders were such as showed that he was in a state of religious and social rebellion. If he was reproached for eating with sinners, he said sarcastically that he did not come to call the righteous. If he was criticized for pursuing his new mission without even so necessary an observance as fasting, he said his new mission was like new wine and must go into a new bottle—as much as to say that their old customs were worn-out old wine-skins, which would not hold a drop of the strong wine of youth. If he was reproved for sabbath-breaking, he said that the sabbath was made for man not man for the sabbath.

It was this sabbath question which proved the last straw. The Pharisees completely broke with him over that question. He was a dangerous man, for he was not only rebellious but successful. They were determined that he should be put down. 'They took counsel against him how they might destroy him.'

The next stage is, The response of Jesus to the action of the Respectabilities. They had cast him out. They had cast him off from the established order. Very well, he would do without them: he would establish a new order. The people were with him, and that was all that mattered—it was for the people he lived, and if the religious respectabilities could not receive his vision the people could. The religious folk would not have him in the synagogue. It did not matter: a boat would do for a pulpit, and the free heavens were as good as any synagogue. 'Jesus with his disciples *withdrew* to the sea: and a great multitude followed.—And he spake to his disciples that a little boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they

should throng him.' As so often happens —indeed, as nearly always happens—the escape from the routine of the established order, the deliverance from the trammels of unreasonable custom, led almost immediately to wider activities. The vision of Jesus began to grow. Since he was to work outside the established agencies, he began to organize an agency of his own. His mind was still set on extending the mission of John, so he chose twelve men from among the crowd of his habitual followers and gave them special instruction, keeping them by him and explaining to them his doctrine, in order that he might afterwards send them out with John's cry upon their lips, that the kingdom of God was at hand—an intention which was afterwards carried into effect.

How these activities of his might have been regarded if he had remained within the pale of religious custom and decorum it is impossible to say. Perhaps he would have been a second John the Baptist, universally regarded as a prophet by the populace, looked upon with some suspicion

by the ruling powers, but not openly denounced by them ' for fear of the people.' This possibility, however, was negatived by the false steps, the social rebellion, the defiant heterodoxy to which he had already committed himself. To go out into the wild country and prophesy in the open air, to sit upon a mountain and there on the serene heights to organize an unheard of mission might, but for this, have been passed by as eccentricity ; but his antecedents converted this eccentricity into sheer madness.

To this stage of rebellion belongs rather a touching little incident. Jesus' old master and tutor, John the Baptizer, sent a deputation to ask him to explain himself. Jesus had a profound reverence for John. John was, indeed, a man of altogether larger mould than the provincial Pharisees with whom Jesus had come into conflict. Still, he belonged to the orthodox. He seems to have entertained great hopes about Jesus. It is even said that he had come to think that he might be the very Messiah himself. At any rate, it is certain

that he had hope he was some sort of coming man who should help in preparing the way of Jehovah. Then he hears about his inviting all kinds of tax-gatherers, Gentiles, and the like to his house; he hears, too, that he has given up fasting—and he is profoundly disappointed. So he sends this deputation; and Jesus is apparently placed in this strait—either he must defy the orthodoxy of John as he has defied that of the Rabbis, or he must prevaricate. He does neither. He sends a gentle answer but a true one—asks only that John (that man of large mind) will not judge him by external rules, but will look beneath the surface—look at his work among the people, 'the poor have good tidings preached to them.'

But you see that the situation was becoming rather painful. To fight the narrow, exclusive ceremonialists may have been exhilarating, but to pain an old friend and teacher—there one feels the rub!

There was a still harder trial approaching. It came to the ears of his brethren in the carpenter's shop at Nazara that their

Jeshua—their brother Jesus—had turned out a glutton and wine-bibber, and a sabbath-breaker, that he did not keep the fasts, that the synagogue did not recognize him, and now that he was organizing some wild mission among his irreligious followers —and there was but one conclusion which could possibly be drawn 'He is beside himself.'

So they came down, they and their heart-broken mother, from their little mountain town to the busy port of Capernaum. When they arrived, Jesus had just come back; he had ventured once more into Capernaum with his twelve missionary students and a host of nondescript disciples —women among them—a certain harlot whom he had saved, besides one or two well-to-do women who ought to have known better, 'Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, Susanna, and many others.'

They came to his house, but could not get in because of the crowd, for 'a multitude was sitting about him; and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy

brethren without seek for thee.' Already he has had to pain his old master, now he knows that he has pained his *family*, and he has to choose. He must break away from his mission or break away from his family. He must forsake his disciples or forsake his brethren. There was of course no room for hesitation, but still it must have cost him a pang to utter those words in which he told his disciples that henceforth *they* would have to be mother and brethren to him for he must lose his own :— 'He answereth them and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren ? And looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren ! '

The same rumour which had reached to Nazareth reached also as far as Jerusalem. There was a pretty brisk traffic between Capernaum and Jerusalem, and the caravans which were always passing to and fro took the news. Forthwith some of the Jerusalem scribes came down to see with their own eyes. They could not deny that the young Rabbi was successful as a healer,

but his eccentric teaching and his irreligious ways sufficiently proved that it was by no divine help that he healed. They declared that the Devil himself aided him to cast out devils.

And then, once more this fiery prophet took a fatal step—once more he set himself to defy the constituted authorities. He had already put himself wrong with Capernaum, now he set himself wrong with Jerusalem. He began by laughing at them —pouring scorn upon the idea of a division in Satan's household—'Satan casting out Satan.' He went on to ask them how their own sons, the other Rabbis, cast the devils out. And finally he warned them in scathing tones of the unpardonable wickedness of calling good 'evil.' They had touched, indeed, the very centre of his belief—the very point for which he contended—the one thing for which he lived and for which he was ready to die. They had declared that the quality of a man's work was to be judged by his observance of traditional religion, while he ever more and more strenuously was coming to

insist that traditional religion did not matter, that what did matter was the heart, and that the heart could read the heart. If they had a good heart they would know that his work was good. But if they looked upon goodness and called it evil they were maligning the Indwelling God himself; 'Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.'

Of this central doctrine of Jesus we have scarcely yet caught a glimpse. We have been looking at the life principally as it appeared to others. In our next study we shall have occasion to look at it more from within; for at this point the gospels give us some account of his teaching and his method, without which, indeed, his subsequent history and fate could not be understood.

II

THE RABBI BECOMES A MESSIAH

WE come now to a period of missionary energy of undetermined duration. The geography of this period is vague and the chronology still vaguer. If there is any truth at all in the theory of a three years' ministry, it is at this part of the story that the extra time involved must be inserted.

But while the externals of the story are just here particularly vague, the inner history becomes more distinct. Jesus goes upon a missionary tour taking his twelve disciples with him. He performs many miracles—the miracle of the Gadarene demoniac, of the woman with an issue of blood, and of the raising of Jairus's daughter are narrated. But I do not dwell upon them, because, while I do not doubt that in each of these three miracles a real

event lies behind the story, I do not think they are of nearly such significance as is generally supposed. What is really significant for the understanding of the life is the character of Jesus' teaching at this time.

Like every teacher in every age Jesus was partly dominated by the ideas of his time, but like every *great* teacher he partly emancipated himself from those ideas. With Jesus the emancipation was quite marvellous—a wonder for all time! And to carry that same emancipation into the hearts and intellects of his countrymen was his aim, as it has been the aim of all the good and great who have worked in the sphere of mind and morals.

Now, there is no possible way of carrying on such a revolution in the popular mind but that of seizing upon the existing ideas and transforming or expanding them. And this was rather specially the case with the Jewish mind, because the Jew had no natural aptitude for philosophic thought. His language was a very concrete language, and his thought always laboured through a series of concrete images. It would have

been useless for Jesus to approach the populace with a scheme of thought expressed in abstract terms; he could only reach them by taking one of their own symbols and reclothing it.

We are all familiar with that governing idea of Jewish belief—'the coming kingdom.' It began with the prophets as a truly poetic figure—lived on through the apocalyptic literature, varying both in form and intensity with the fortunes of the nation—always blazing up into renewed vigour when those fortunes were depressed—until in the time of Jesus it died out in despair in the hearts of the cultivated Sadducees, but was passionately maintained with a desperate and even fanatical enthusiasm by a great part of the populace.

Upon this notion, then, of the coming kingdom, Jesus seized, and upon this he worked. Perhaps he was himself partly dominated by the idea. But at any rate he very plainly saw that the sort of kingdom his countrymen desired was not only impossible, but *bad*. And at this beginning of his missionary work he threw

his whole energy into supplanting it by a better and truer notion.

We have in the gospels the parable of the sower; the parable of the mustard seed; and the parable of the seed springing up we know not how, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. All of them are narrated to explain the nature of the coming kingdom; all of them insist that it does not come with observation—that it comes by growth, not by catastrophe. Jesus has in fact a new conception of the kingdom, and it is upon this that he insists and again and again insists; it is this which he 'privately expounds to his own disciples.'

His whole heart is set upon revolutionizing the Jewish idea of the Messianic kingdom. So full is he of this purpose, that like every enthusiast he expects success to be rapid and certain. When, in the course of one of his circuits of the country, he comes to his native town, it apparently does not occur to him (what seems so natural to us) that the very familiarity of the townsmen with his name and

early history will lessen his influence. When he preached and was rejected, we read that 'he *marvelled* because of their unbelief.' In most cases, however, he attains the success which he expects, and so far his rupture with the Rabbis has not done his cause much harm.

It now appears to him that the time has come to carry out his project of extended missionary effort by means of his twelve companions. Accordingly he calls them to him, gives them instructions, and sends them out two by two. His instructions are exceedingly interesting, for they are almost identical with the instructions which were given to travelling *Essenes*. (The Essenes, as is well known, were Jewish monks who lived in the Wilderness of Judea). These instructions were—to stay only at the houses of those who were in accord with their aims and teaching, who would be recognized by their reception of the Selam or greeting of peace—to carry no provisions, no wallet, no money, and no clothes but those they were wearing—a single pair of sandals and a single tunic—

to receive no pay for their good works except food and shelter for the time of their sojourn—and not to visit about from house to house, but stay in the one house in each town or village where they first put up until they departed thence.

These instructions show how much in sympathy Jesus was with many of the Essenian practices; but they do not in the least prove him to be an Essene. The Essene was even stricter than the Pharisee in ceremonial matters. To sit down to table with an unclean person, as Jesus now very often did, was utterly abhorrent to the Essene. Neither did Jesus practise the elaborate occultism of the Essenes. He was, in fact, a wholly unsectarian person—in his manners an itinerant Essene, in his ideas a heterodox Pharisee—but neither Pharisee, Sadducee, nor Essene in exclusiveness.

So these twelve missionaries went out two by two 'and preached that men should repent, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick.'

And here you will notice how naturally all this follows upon previous events. First you have the choosing of the twelve ; then you have the statement that Jesus took them with him upon his own missionary tour ; next you have the fact, two or three times repeated, that he privately explained his parables to them ; and finally you have them sent out two by two in different directions. It is evident that Jesus deliberately put them through a course of training, for the express purpose of fitting them for this organized effort to extend his teaching. It was the plan which he adopted to spread his new views about the nature of the kingdom throughout the land of Israel. Was their mission a success ? Well, the gospels say that it was. Mark tells us that ' they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.' (Mark always makes a good deal of the miracles, far more than Jesus made of them). There are indications, however, that in reality the success was very partial, and that as a matter of fact the disciples only half-

understood the doctrine they were sent to teach. The external and immediate effect—the unpremeditated effect—of the enterprise was that Jesus' 'name became known,' and that Herod himself heard of him. For the first time in his life he came to be a person of political significance—a fact which contributed, according to Mark's account, to hasten the tragic end.

As soon as the apostles returned from their expedition Jesus tenderly took them out into the wild country that they might be alone and rest, 'for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.' But the people came flocking after them, and we read that '*he began to teach them many things*,' out of which teaching there afterwards grew up the story of his having '*fed*' the multitude in the wilderness.

It was on this occasion that the Pharisees appeared again upon the scene, asking for a sign, which Jesus sternly refused to give them. It is plain that he loathed these theological controversies, for we read in this connexion that he 'sighed deeply in his

spirit,' and as soon as he could escape from them he crossed over the lake to Bethsaida, that he might have a little peace. After a short time he returned again, but endeavoured to avoid the controversialists by staying outside Capernaum, on the little lake-side plain of Gennesaret.

If you know anything at all of the ways of theological disputants, you will not be surprised to hear that this precaution availed him nothing. The Pharisees sallied out as soon as they heard his whereabouts, and this time they brought with them scribes from Jerusalem. They attacked him on the subject of the ceremonial washing of hands, and after a sharp passage of arms and a stern invective, he closed the incident with a memorable utterance :—

'He called to him the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand, every one of you : Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man ; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man.'

This incident marks a crisis. Of course

we do not possess it in its entirety. But certainly Jesus must on this occasion have gone much further in heterodoxy than he had ever gone before. The breach with the Pharisees was complete. From this time they were *mad* against him. His disciples thought he could hardly know the deep offence that he had given. Perhaps they were a little staggered themselves at this logical conclusion—this sweeping principle—which seemed to go dead against *all* ceremonialism—*all* doctrines of clean and unclean whatever! They came and said unto him 'Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' But he, still wrought to high tension, and throbbing with intense opposition to the externalism which everywhere enslaved the people, answered with a stern and scornful indifference 'Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit.'

In all probability it was not the scribes alone, nor even the leading Pharisees who were offended. The Johannine narrative

says that after this incident many of the *people* left him. Indeed, it seems to have been generally felt that in thus throwing over *all* externals whatever he had been going too far. Hitherto he had been opposed by the *strict* Pharisees and the *official* scribes, but the *people* had been with him. Now, the whole body of the Pharisees, and, in alliance with them, the supporters of Herod also, were combined against him, and, what was more serious and far more fatal to his cause, even the people were, *as a whole*, no longer with him.

From this time forward his life was believed to be in danger. He resolved, therefore, to absent himself for a time from the Galilean scene of action: wandered far away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and even there he hid himself, and tried to prevent its being known that he was in the neighbourhood. Then he came down through Decapolis again, near to the Sea of Galilee, but on the *farther* shore; and then he wandered off again north-eastward towards Cæsarea Philippi; where he was safe because the

district was outside Herod's jurisdiction. The geography of these wanderings is exceedingly uncertain, but the general impression we receive is that he was moving about in distant regions in danger of his life. The tide had ebbed. He was unpopular.

And now comes the central crisis of his life. He was on the road from one village to another in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. He had been walking, perhaps, in meditation a little in advance of his disciples. Suddenly he paused and turned to them. 'Who do men say that I am?' And they told him 'John the Baptist: others, Elijah: others, one of the prophets.' Again he pauses; and then with penetrating glance he asks, 'But who say ye that I am?' Peter answers on behalf of all 'Thou art the Christ.' And—*Jesus does not deny it.*

What, then, had been passing in *his* mind? What had been passing in the minds of his *disciples*? What had been passing in the minds of the *people*?

Well, it is clear that to the people

generally it had not occurred that he might be the expected Messiah. Once or twice madmen had shouted out this extravagant idea, but Jesus had sternly silenced them. Here and there an Israelite, more spiritually minded than the mob, might have entertained the idea (some of the women, perhaps, who were so enthusiastically attached to his teaching). But in general it is evident that he did not in any great degree fulfil the popular idea of the Messiah. The Messiah was to cast all demons into the abyss, was to rebuild the temple and restore the full and free temple service, and was to place Israel at the head of all the nations of the earth. Now, it was true that Jesus was exceedingly successful in casting out demons—more successful than any ordinary Rabbi. But *there* the resemblance to the Messiah ended. He had not taken the first step towards restoring Israel or Israel's worship. The temple was still largely controlled by the Romans. The high-priest's ephod was kept locked in the Roman proconsul's chest except when he chose to give it out.

It was only by means of an alliance between the Sadducees and the heathen power that the temple service was carried on at all.

Then, as to the supremacy of Israel, Jesus never took any part at all in politics; never joined the zealots; paid tribute like any other Jew; and showed no sign of raising a revolt. In fact, the central principle of his teaching was clean against all attempt at domination.

It was plain, then, that to the crowd Jesus might seem something very great—perhaps Elijah, whose return was popularly believed to precede the advent of Messiah, perhaps simply a prophet doing a prophet's work—but it could scarcely occur to them that he was the Messiah himself.

But, how about the disciples? That is a more difficult question. Still if we remember that Jesus had, of late, been more and more insisting upon the spiritual nature of the kingdom, and that he had declared that the kingdom was imminent and had even said that it was actually *here*, though hidden; if we consider how

probable it is that words may have dropped from Jesus' lips indicating the nature of that kingdom's head—a spiritual *Messiah* as well as a spiritual *kingdom*, we shall see how possible it is that this thought (that Jesus was this new kind of Messiah) may have gradually grown up in the disciples' mind, and how this question which Jesus thus suddenly put to them acted as the determining touch—the shock—the spark—causing that slowly forming idea to crystallize—so that Peter exclaimed (half-wondering perhaps at his own audacity) 'Thou art the Christ.'

And now, finally, what was passing in the mind of Jesus? Upon the answer to this question the whole of the subsequent history depends.

We must remember, then, in the first place, that in allowing this title of 'Messiah' to be attributed to him Jesus was only one of many. From Judah of Gaulonitis who, in the generation before Jesus, had claimed to be Messiah, down to Bar-Cochba, who made the same claim a century later, more than fifty Messiahs

arose—more than fifty leaders of rebellion claiming the Messianic office—and each one of these fifty had a considerable popular following. I do not know that all these were Galileans by birth, but Galilee was nearly always the fountain-head of these insurrectionary movements. It was in Galilee that Judah of Gaulonitis found his followers. Like Jesus he claimed to be the Messiah, and like Jesus he was crucified. His descendant, John of Giscala, was another Galilean Messiah. He too was crucified. Theudas, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, was a third Galilean Christ: he also was crucified. The names of some others are known: and it is recorded that there were at least fifty such 'Christs.'

Now, if we give due weight to this fact, we shall perceive what a different colour it puts upon the claim of Jesus. So long as we are tied to the idea that the Jews expected One Christ—one supernatural Christ—that none had yet made that claim—and that suddenly Jesus arises and proclaims, 'I am that supernatural

Christ,' there is from the human point of view something almost shocking in the claim. Of course if Jesus came from a conscious life in heaven directly commissioned by God to work miracles, be crucified, and save the world, then it is quite in order that he should permit this title; but if he was a human being like ourselves, growing from infancy through a succession of purely human experiences, discovering by slow steps the presence of God in human life, and depending, like ourselves, upon the heavenly Father for daily help—then, however great he may have been, however vast his genius, however supreme his gift of spiritual insight and prophetic power, there would, nevertheless, be something immodest, something unnatural, something, I should say, fanatical, in claiming to be *the* One for whom all the ages had till then been looking.

But that is not a true conception of the facts. The case is otherwise. This Jesus is a Galilean; he belongs to a race of men who are being continually deluded by hot-headed patriots, by fanatical zealots, by

revolutionists thirsting for the blood of Rome. One after the other they arise, each taking upon himself the name of Messiah. One after the other they lead their countrymen to death and disaster, only riveting more firmly about the necks of their unhappy countrymen the yoke of Rome.

This is the people that Jesus lives among; and all the claim he makes is this:—'You have followed many Christs, let *me* now be your Christ. Your Christ must be a patriot? I will show you a new and spiritual patriotism. He must be a revolutionist? I will teach you a new revolution—a social revolution, based upon spiritual principles, and better than any political revolt. He must be a zealot? I will show you a new outlet for your zeal—and one which will call for all your courage, all your devotion to Israel's cause. I will be a new kind of Messiah to you—a spiritual Messiah.'

Imagine, by way of a rough and ready parallel, that a Mahdi (a Mohammedan Christ) had arisen in Africa; some man of

insight and foresight who had pondered deeply upon life and life's meaning; and suppose the burden of his harangues were this:—'You have had many Mahdis: they have led you in vain against the British guns. Now forget all this. Let *me* be your Mahdi. I will show you a better way than this vain thirst for the blood of your enemies; a better strife than this strife for dominion. Let us not *resist* our enemies, let us *love* them.'

Such a man might be put down for a visionary, might be blamed for a deficient sense of the value of liberty; he might be torn in pieces by the frantic warriors of his own nation for his want of patriotism; or more likely he might be wholly misunderstood by the blundering British and blown from their guns on the supposition that he was only another of these troublesome rebels; but with one thing he could not be justly charged: he could not be charged with fanatical ambition.

Thus it was with Jesus and his claim to be the Messiah. Jesus was greater than the idea. In a sense he *played* with the

idea—he *used* it—or more accurately, *fulfilled* it. It *did* represent a reality, but the reality was greater than the symbol, and he resolved, *through* the symbol, to lead his countrymen to the reality.

And the attempt, one would say, might well have succeeded, only his hand was forced. The people were not ripe for the claim; and yet he was obliged to make it. Could he have continued his Galilean mission for a few *years* instead of a few *months*; could he have gathered round him all the most spiritual Israelites and opened their eyes to the true nature of the kingdom and the king's anointed; could he, in short, have educated his Galilean brethren up to his own poetic standpoint, it is possible (is it not?) that so great a teacher as Jesus might have brought about the peaceful revolution which he sought. Or is this to drink too deeply of his own optimism? Were the Galileans too gross? Is human nature altogether too prosaic to stand the strain of this high poetry in real life?

However this may be, Jesus had no such

opportunity. The opposition of the Pharisees had become so virulent, that he was forced to hasten his work if it was to be done at all. Already he had been hunted about from place to place. Galilee was virtually closed to him, and that meant that he must leave Israel to its fate or else go to Judea. He had hoped for a much stronger following in Galilee before he attacked Jewish formalism in its *head-quarters*; but it could not now be. He knew that it would be a dangerous mission under present circumstances, and therefore he was bound to show his disciples the whole programme. He had taught them of the kingdom, now he must teach them of the Messiah.

Thus it was that he was led to the point at which we have now arrived. He asks them the great question and Peter gives the memorable answer 'Thou art the Christ.' Matthew tells us of a glad outburst of thankfulness on the part of Jesus at this answer. With his inimitable optimism, he supposes that the disciples have really grasped his great thought.

But they had not *grasped* it; they had merely had a momentary vision of it. And scarcely had the words left Peter's lips before he fell back to his old level. A very familiar human experience! How often have we seen a man enter into a great but unfamiliar idea, and then lose sight of it again! How often have we seen him embrace a notion with enthusiasm, fascinated by its beauty and morality and then, when it comes to the *practical application* of the beautiful idea, shrink from it with dismay! 'Far be it from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee.' 'But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.'

From this time Jesus, whose eyes were now fully open to the fate which probably awaited him, set himself to the double task of convincing his disciples that the only true Messiah must be a *spiritual* Messiah, and also that he must needs be a *suffering* Messiah. 'If any man would come after

me, he must deny himself.' 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.' 'What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?' These and other such pregnant sayings fell from his lips as they passed on from village to village. His disciples, after the first flash of discovery, were debating and doubting. They accepted his claim, they even accepted an utterance which he delivered at this time that some of them should not taste of death till they saw the kingdom of God come. But one thing perplexed them: '*Elijah* had not come!' If Jesus was the Messiah, where was Elijah? They ventured to put the question to him and he told them that Elijah had come already, and they had done unto him whatsoever they listed. Thus he taught them of a spiritual and suffering Elijah, as well as a spiritual and suffering Messiah.

So they reached again the borders of Galilee, passing slowly southward. He travelled secretly, lingering in the wild

country by day, and entering the villages at nightfall; intent always on his one task of preparing his disciples for what was coming. Public teaching, healing, everything must be set aside for this—and he must have *quiet*; he must have time to thoroughly imbue his disciples' minds with this new view of the kingdom. He had reckoned upon *years* of preparation; and now he saw that there might be only *weeks*. And so, over and over again, in one form or another he repeated this refrain 'The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men; and they shall kill him.'—'But they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him.'

'They understood not the saying!'—it was pathetic. Nothing that he could say to them, nothing that he could teach them, could bring these poor peasant learners to his own high poetic point of view. Even now, after these days of careful, quiet, deliberate instruction, they showed by one notable incident how grossly they failed to conceive him. That he was the *Messiah*, they no longer doubted; that he

should *suffer*, they had not *begun* to understand. And so, as they travelled by quiet mountain paths toward Capernaum, they fell to talking of the kingdom—the Messiah's kingdom—the kingdom at Jerusalem, where he who walked there in front of them (now in deep meditation) should reign over Israel. They talked of the kingdom and their own places in it, and which of them should be the nearest and the greatest.

Jesus heard them, as they raised their voices in hot dispute—but he said no word. So they came to Capernaum: and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were ye reasoning in the way? But they held their peace: And he sat down and called the twelve; and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all. And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them: and taking him in his arms he said unto them—Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom.'

III

THE MESSIAH BECOMES A MARTYR

WE have, now reached the point where, after Jesus had accepted the declaration of his Messiahship, he returned with his disciples to Capernaum. It was his farewell to the beloved town and his home there. We do not know how long he stayed. His persecutors would probably not allow him to remain there many days, neither is it likely, now that the confession of his Messiahship was made, that he would long delay the next inevitable step.

This inevitable step was quite clear to his own mind. The confession which had been whispered into the ears of his disciples at Cæsarea must be proclaimed aloud in Jerusalem. In no other way could the movement be prevented from becoming purely local. 'Just as previously Judas the Galilean had led his troops from

Gamala southwards, just as the Egyptian of the year 59 occupied the mount of Olives, as all the later Messiahs stretched forth their hands towards the temple on which the guidance of the people depended, so now we behold Jesus starting forth for Jerusalem.'[1] 'He arose from thence, and cometh into the borders of Judea and beyond Jordan.'

There—near about the scene of his baptism—he seems to have lingered for awhile: but it was a different baptism which awaited him now—a baptism which he had little expected in those first sanguine days. Now it was, and here, that he spoke those words of foreboding to which the scene of their utterance gives a tragic significance, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!'

I suppose his intention was, while lingering in the borders of Jordan, within easy reach of the capital, to allow his doctrine and especially his new Messianic claim to *filter* into the minds of the people.

[1] Hausrath, II, p. 232.

He wished them to work gradually like leaven, not to descend like a thunderbolt upon unprepared minds. This was certainly the wise course to pursue : the only possible course, indeed, if his career was not to be cut suddenly short before ever he had time to make his teaching known or give the people so much as a chance of accepting it.

And it was a course which was justified apparently by the first results. 'Multitudes come together unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them.' Mothers came to have their children blessed by the Messiah. Men came to ask advice on several points—some worldly, some spiritual. A rich young man came to ask what he should do to inherit the blessings of the coming Messianic kingdom. Nearly all the incidents belonging to this time have reference to the claim of Messiahship which Jesus has now set up.

Among others were the religious leaders from Jerusalem. They heard of the new movement and came to test it. The Pharisees came with their catch-question,

'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?' And to their surprise his answer savoured of the school of Shammai, whereas so much of his teaching seemed hitherto to savour of the more liberal school of Hillel! Truly, this man could not be classified!

At length the time came when Jesus must enter the capital. The great question which had been haunting his mind must be answered. His teaching must be put to the test. His claims must be accepted or rejected. His whole being hung passionately on the issue of the venture. Would they accept him? Would they be content with a *spiritual* Messiah? Would they follow his lead? Would they purify their worship? Would they kindle to his ideal of brotherly love and neighbourly helpfulness? of just dealing, and simple living, and the conquest even of the oppressor by kindness? Was there fire enough yet in the ashes of the old faith to break into so heavenly a flame? He knew the risks; he knew that the idea was almost desperate, but still he hoped. His own soul burnt with such a fire of conviction, that he

felt that the souls of others must surely kindle. His aspect, as he went upon his life-and-death mission, was almost awful. 'They were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid.'

Their fear must have been the fear—the awe—of sympathetic but half-instructed natures for a sublime and intense experience which they observe but only dimly apprehend. They perfectly well understood that the crisis was approaching. But apparently they had no apprehension of the result: *fear* in *this* sense they had none. On the contrary, they seem to have been full of eager expectation. They had great confidence in Jesus, and they fully believed that he would soon be the head of the nation.

So much was this the case that two of his disciples—two of those whom he most trusted—who had been with him from the very first, must needs choose this unutterable moment to lay before him a little petition which they had agreed upon—a

favour, which they thought, as some of his oldest adherents, they were quite entitled to ask—the favour, namely, of sitting the one on his right hand and the other on his left in the coming kingdom!

Truly the patience of Jesus is marvellous as he once more tells them what he has again and again insisted upon, that the very nature of the coming kingdom—the very meaning of the new social order which it was his whole object to establish, was that the great among them should be the servant, and the first among them the slave of all!

And so they came down the farther bank of Jordan, crossed the ford opposite to Jericho, and entered that town. Here Jesus stayed the night, and here he illustrated that saying to which he had just given utterance. He who seemed so great, and yet sometimes seemed so perverse in his actions, must needs, after his own inscrutable manner, choose the house of a *publican* to stay at! Of course such a proceeding caused great murmuring and discontent. He, a Jew—he, a *prophet*—

nay, he, *the Messiah* (as he now gave himself out to be), must needs put up with an unclean tax-gatherer employed by heathen rulers to fleece and rob the chosen people. How could he expect to have his claims acknowledged! Truly this Jesus had no worldly '*tact*' at all. He did not go the way to work to succeed. It looked almost as if he really *meant* what he was so fond of saying—that the new order was to be a topsy-turvy arrangement with the first last and the last first.

However, the night passed, and they resumed their journey, and the dissatisfaction died down. There was a blind man sitting by the wayside as they left the town. He had heard of this new Messiah; and called after him by the recognized Messianic title 'Son of David,' and Jesus healed him. This, they thought, was as it should be—it accorded with the traditional idea.

So they journeyed on towards the barren rocky mountains. By a steep bridle-path they ascended the ridge which hid Jerusalem from them. There were with him

a number of Galileans besides his twelve disciples. At length they came to a spot where on an eastern spur of the mount of Olives the villages of Bethany and Bethphage emerged—Jerusalem still hidden by the mountain. Here Jesus sent two of his disciples to fetch an ass which he had previously arranged should be ready for him. It seemed but a humble steed to carry the Messiah into his capital, but doubtless the multitude remembered the words of Zechariah, which were universally accepted as Messianic in their intention 'Behold, thy king cometh unto thee: lowly, and sitting upon an ass.' Doubtless, too, Jesus performed this act with reference to this very prophecy, and precisely because he knew that the people would so understand it. It both claimed the Messiahship, and claimed it in just that sense in which he himself understood it.

And then came the entry into Jerusalem of which we know the story so well. The cries of 'Hosanna to the son of David' receive their significance, of course, from the fact that he now permitted this

Messianic title to be ascribed to him. The priests and scribes were indignant at the whole proceeding, and this day's work was, in fact, the first step down to the sepulchre. The second step was the purification of the temple, which happened on the following day, which is also too familiar to need description. The result of it was what might be expected, 'The chief priests and scribes heard of it, and sought how they might destroy him.'

The *people*, however, who had *wavered* in Galilee, were *with* him again now that he was proclaimed Messiah; and for this reason the authorities delayed taking any decisive measures. 'They feared him, for all the multitude was astonished at his teaching.' Whether Jesus had hoped to win the very scribes and priests to his more spiritual view of Israel's kingdom I am not sure. If he had, he was soon undeceived, for he presently found himself involved in a deadly warfare with them. They commenced by challenging his authority to interfere with the proceedings in the temple-courts, and we know his

answer. They then proceeded to collect evidence against him by various devices: the question of the tribute money: the question of divorce: the question of his own Messianic claims in the light of his Galilean descent.

He on his part was driven to speak fierce parables against these cunning religionists —in particular the parable of the vineyard and the wicked husbandmen who killed the heir (for he began to see how it would end), a parable which drove his opponents to exasperation 'for they perceived that he spake the parable against them.' Then he began openly to warn the people to beware of these scribes. In fact he did, here, as he had done in Galilee: he *completely broke with the authorities.*

At this point it is important to understand the situation. Jesus had broken with the temple-authorities; so that if he was to carry out his great reform, it could not be by their help. On the other hand, he found that he could not carry it out over their heads. The priests and scribes were against him, and the *people* were not strong enough.

The result was that the hope of an ideal kingdom in any near future vanished from his heart, and an intense depression began to sink down upon him. This depression communicated itself to his disciples. They began to doubt. They had never really comprehended his poetic programme. They still had visions of a great Jerusalem success —a revolution, and then, Jesus on a throne and they on twelve other thrones; and—they did not see much sign yet of any such event. Peasants as they were, they were naturally overawed by the great men of Jerusalem, and it could not escape them that these great men were one and all in deadly opposition to their Master.

It was at this time, when Jesus saw well that the 'husbandmen would kill the heir,' when he saw equally clearly that the kingdom could not come yet, and that none, not even the angels, could tell when come it would—when the disciples had begun to waver, and one of them had already begun to turn over in his mind how he could best secure his own retreat—it was at this time that one of the most

touching incidents in the Bible story occurred.

It was two days before the passover. Jesus had returned from his daily visit to Jerusalem, had climbed the mount of Olives and dropped down into the little village of Bethany, and was sitting at supper with his twelve disciples in the house of Simon the leper, where he had characteristically taken up his quarters. A profound melancholy brooded over the company. The disciples began to see things with open eyes. Here was this young Rabbi whom they greatly loved and of whom they had hoped so much—this teacher, who had grown before their eyes from teacher to prophet, from prophet to Messiah—who had been, as it were, transfigured in their imaginations, from the peasant Rabbi to the heavenly Messenger of Light—this Christ, whom they had brought into the holy city with shouts of triumph—here he was sitting in the leper's house, a sorrowful and unsuccessful man.

The great people had looked on at first

with supercilious scorn, afterwards with anger. The *mob*, at first inclined to respond, had soon been overawed by the authorities. In fact, the whole thing had fallen flat. Their prophet began to look to them like a common man. The rays of his transfiguration-light began to fade away, and they felt that their dream was breaking. Perhaps he was *not* the Messiah after all.

At this critical moment there stole through the open doorway a woman—one of those few women who had followed him from Galilee—(would that we knew so much as her name!). This woman, well knowing the sadness and doubt which had wrapped themselves round the Master—did a deed which none but a woman could do, which none but a woman's heart could have conceived.

What! Did they begin to doubt that he was the Anointed of God! Was there none to proclaim his Messiahship? Had the great people at Jerusalem no visible anointing for him, and did his very disciples begin to waver? Then *she*, a mere woman, an *Oriental* woman to boot—con-

demned for ever to take the lower place —*she*, woman as she was, would make bold to do what none other seemed ready to perform—to assert his Messiahship, and to proclaim him the Christ of God. She drew from her robe a little alabaster flask of sweet spikenard: a precious unguent upon which she had spent her little all. Holding it above his head as he reclined upon the divan, she broke it in two, and the nard as it flowed down his locks filled the whole chamber with its breath.

Thus, in perfect modesty, without a word, she, the nameless Galilean woman, anointed Jesus as Messiah, and that, save the witness of heaven, was the only anointing that he ever had.

It was an act of transcendent beauty, and Jesus was very deeply touched. That the disciples did not rise to the poetry of it, shows how deeply they were plunged in gloom and doubt. To them, or at least to some of them, it seemed a foolish act—a mere waste of good ointment. This *woman*, what did she know of the matter, that she should take upon herself this

office, that she should venture to assert that the moment for anointing had come, or that it would ever come at all? She had better have given her gold to feed the poor, and purchased for herself some consideration from heaven, to set over against the shame of her having been born a daughter of Eve.

Jesus, full of the poetry of the act, yet still labouring under the foreboding of his fate, rebuked them and gave to the incident this most pathetic turn: Let her alone, why do ye trouble her? She thinks she has anointed me for *the kingdom*. She could not do that. But she hath done what she could. She hath anointed my body *for the burying*.

The disappointment which was felt by the disciples was allowed by one of them to deepen into bitterness. Judas of Kerioth, a Judean by birth, looked, like the rest, for a material kingdom; but unlike them he did not hold, side by side with this vain hope, the deep reverence and affection which could survive its dissipation and defeat. He had been an

enthusiast, he had hailed with delight the hope of a Jewish kingdom, with a place in it for himself, and now nothing that he was expecting had taken place. Nay, not only were his hoped-for rewards denied him, but he found himself in actual peril. He saw how things would end for his master, and where the master was in danger, it could not be very safe for the disciples. He determined, therefore, to make the best terms he could with the Sanhedrin, and save his own skin. He asked and received a bribe equal in value to about £20 of our money.

It was Wednesday, the day before the passover must be eaten, and Jesus made arrangements for the paschal meal, which must necessarily be eaten in *Jerusalem.* The difficulty was that the meal could not be over before ten or eleven o'clock at night, so that Jesus would not be able to leave the city by daylight as he had hitherto done. He knew that by day there was little danger of his being apprehended, but that it would be dangerous for him to stay in the city at night. He

therefore took special precautions. He suspected the treachery of Judas, and resolved to tell none of the disciples where the passover was to be eaten, so that the place might not become known to Judas. He then made arrangements with a friend whom the apostles themselves did not know. The arrangement was that at a certain hour in the course of Thursday this friend would send a man to a place agreed upon, and that, as a means of recognition, the man should carry a pitcher of water.

'Two of the apostles, sent by Jesus, were to recognize him by this sign, and to follow him without speaking. Following him, they were to enter the house which he entered, and there, safe from indiscreet observers, they would be brought before the master of the house, to whom they were to say: "The Rabbi says, 'Where is my chamber, where I may eat the passover with my disciples?'" The master would then show them a large chamber, a dining-room furnished with rugs, couches, and all that was necessary for a meal.'[1]

[1] Stapfer, III, p. 88.

Everything took place as had been foreseen. The two appointed disciples entered the city in the afternoon and found the room prepared. They took the lamb, which they had purchased four days before, to the temple, and had it inspected by the priests. It was passed as 'without blemish,' and was immediately slain and flayed, and the supper prepared.

At sunset the priests sounded the silver trumpets from the temple-hill, and then, throughout Jerusalem the passover supper began. Jesus and his disciples were assembled in their guest-chamber, extended in Oriental fashion upon cushions and rugs. Jesus broke the great flat cakes of unleavened bread, and piled the broken pieces one upon another. Before him was the lamb cut into equal pieces; and beside this dish of meat was a dish of lettuce or wild chicory, and another containing a sauce of a reddish colour, into which each in turn dipped his piece of unleavened bread.

I need not enter further into the details of that ever memorable passover, nor of

that still more memorable rite of the broken body and the shed blood which Jesus associated with it. It was eaten on the evening of Thursday, 6 April, A.D. 30—a night never to be forgotten.

While they were at supper Jesus hinted at the defection which he had detected among them. Judas was present, but the appeal brought no repentance. He was with them when they sang their psalm and went out to the mount of Olives. He was with them probably when they reached the gate of the olive-yard known to us as Gethsemane; and then, when Jesus had passed in with three of them, leaving the rest at the entrance, he slipped away in the darkness, and hurried to the temple (only a few minutes distant), to fetch the high-priest's guard.

I need not tell again the story of the agony in Gethsemane, the story of the taking of Jesus and the flight of his disciples, nor the touching story of Peter's denial. As to the *trial*, the account of it is very perplexed, but what seems to have taken place is this :—

Jesus having been secured, the Sanhedrin were hastily summoned, although it was still night. Either on this account, or because they did not obtain a quorum, the night-trial was only regarded as a preliminary investigation of the case. The very wide charge of 'blasphemy,' which appears to have meant much what 'heresy' does with us, seemed sufficiently attested, and the Sanhedrin separated, leaving Jesus in the hands of a guard of soldiers.

In the morning *the whole* Sanhedrin came together, the case was laid before them, and they voted upon it, confirming the proceedings of the night-council, and thus making it regular and legal.

It is a matter of dispute whether the Sanhedrin had, at this time, the power of inflicting capital punishment. Either because they had not this power, or because they wished in the eyes of the populace to shift the blame off their own shoulders to those of the Roman governor, they decided to take him to Pilate and there accuse him of treason.

Pilate cared nothing about the charge of 'blasphemy,' so they accused him of civil offences—such as laying claim to royalty, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and stirring the people up to tumult. Pilate saw their animus very plainly and perceived that there was no danger to the State to be apprehended from Jesus, and he tried to get out of the difficulty by releasing him in accordance with the custom by which a prisoner was always liberated at each passover. He had in custody at that time a certain felon named Jesus Bar Abbas (for such we learn was the full name of the well-known criminal); and he put it to the Jews whether he should release to them Jesus Bar Abbas or Jesus Bar Joseph. With one accord they chose Barabbas for release and Jesus of Nazareth for death. So 'Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.'

While the preparations for the crucifixion were being made, Jesus, still bleeding

from the scourge, was thrust into the guard-room, and there the ignorant and brutal soldiers, who saw in him only an absurd rival to Cæsar, threw an old purple mantle round him, thrust a reed into his hand for sceptre, and wove a crown of brambles for his brow. Thus they jeered at his supposed pretensions to royalty and satisfied their own lust for cruelty. A sickening scene!

It was nine o'clock on Friday morning. The procurator had a whole battalion at the palace ready for any riot that the turbulent Jews who were now assembled in their thousands for the feast, might suddenly create, as they had often done before. The whole battalion of five hundred was under arms in the court, and a company of sixty was now told off to keep order during the execution.

The procession set out through the palace gate and passed through the most frequented quarters of the city. A herald went first, proclaiming the nature of the offence, and a soldier carrying a white board with a statement of the crime

printed on it. Then came the three victims, Jesus and the others, each carrying the cross-beam which was afterwards to be fixed to the upright stake. At the city gate Jesus, exhausted by the suspense and agony of the last few days, and fainting from loss of blood, could hold up no longer, and in spite of the blows which were rained upon him, he could not stir ; so, to prevent delay, they compelled a foreign Jew, who happened to be just entering the city, to carry the cross-beam. Then the procession again moved forward.

When they arrived at the place of execution (a low cliff just beyond the city wall), they found the three stakes ready prepared. It remained to nail the hands to the cross-beam and then raise the beam (with the body suspended) by means of ropes and ladders to the top of the stake, where it was inserted in a groove and tied with cords.

Before this was done, there was offered to Jesus, as to all victims of this cruel Roman mode of execution, a drink of strong wine and frankincense, which the ladies of Jerusalem prepared at their own

expense, in order to numb the pain of those about to suffer. But Jesus refused it. He wished to preserve his full consciousness to the end. So they stripped him, laid him on the ground, nailed his hands to the beam, and raised it to the top of the stake. Then the board which had been carried in the procession was fastened above his head—'The King of the Jews.'

Jesus hung upon the cross for about six hours before he died. He breathed his last soon after three in the afternoon. His body was obtained from Pilate by Joseph of Arimathæa, a member of the Sanhedrin, and laid in a tomb 'and Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.' The account of the resurrection is very puzzling, and the evidence conflicting. The facts which seem certain are (1) that the tomb was found empty, and (2) that many disciples saw apparitions of Jesus after his death.

As to the first fact there are several hypotheses to account for it. For many a year the belief remained among the Jews that the body had been removed at night

by some of his disciples—taken perhaps to the old Galilean home. But the matter must necessarily be one of pure conjecture.

As to the second fact, a hypothesis widely held by some critics, is that the apparitions were the sign and consequence of a spiritual but real individual presence of Jesus—that the apparitions were *subjective* in the sense that the revelation was to the mind and affection—the *spirit* of the disciple—working *out from* the spirit upon the bodily organs and in particular upon the optic centres, and so projecting an apparition of bodily form; but that they were *not* subjective in the sense of being unreal, or morbid hallucinations.

One thing, however, seems clear, the apparitions of Jesus were very numerous. And this does at least prove how profound was the impression which he created. If we cannot be content with this, let us cherish it as that which *at least* is certain. There is *life* for us in the thought that so humble and obscure a soul could leave behind so vast an influence: there is bread for the heart in the knowledge that such

a life was lived and that so great a spirit crossed this earth we tread.

What Jesus has been to us—what he has been to the world—that, after all, is the supreme fact. He has been in the most real sense a revelation of God. You may say that he has been so by means of mere poetic fancy. But these poems, these ideals do not spring from the air : the god-man of any age or race has always sprung from real human life, and before he was embodied in legend he moved among men as one who had himself *found God.*

And it was so with Jesus. When we pierce through the veil of fancy and get a glimpse of the real Jesus, we do not lose, we gain : for we see one there who had indeed *found God*—one who by utter faithfulness to the inward vision had risen to that level of being at which the vain ambitions of this world fade into thin air ; the maxims and customs and rigid rules of time-serving prudence are a vain lie ; and in whom death itself is vanquished by the burning presence of the God within.

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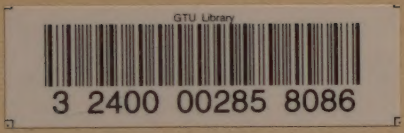

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